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INTRODUCTION

Repeated visits were necessary to complete the studies. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, however, each report is presented as the result of one visit of continuous interviews. Though this necessitated telescoping the time element, it in no way affects the material contributed by the persons interviewed.

Today sorcery is still practiced. Modern root doctors, visited frequently by their superstitious clients, perform mystic rites and promise to work miracles and cures. Many coastal Negroes view adversity not as the workings of fate but as the revenge of a personal enemy brought about by the mystic working of the conjure doctor. To this type of Negro there is little talk of "bad luck." To him it is "bad mouth" set against him by an enemy.

It is understandable that the older coastal Negro's use of ceremony and even the ordinary routine of his daily life are influenced profoundly by his beliefs. His imagination continues to crowd his world with spirits, both good and evil. Spirits of the departed are still believed to make frequent visitations to the earth and are as real to this type of Negro as his next door neighbor. Into his Christian ceremonies these superstitions and customs have been injected, lending a distinctiveness not found in many of the white man's ceremonies.

As the field of opportunity widens for the Negro and as his culture begins to approximate that of his white neighbor, it is among this fast vanishing type that the remnants of folk memories still live, without which this collection of source material could not have been compiled.

MARY GRANGER, *District Supervisor*
Georgia Writers' Project

Savannah, Georgia
November 4, 1940.

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theah is treasure buried heah unduh me, but I wouldn't try to get it. It is bad luck. That spirit warned me.

"I see witches, too," he continued. "Not everybody can tell a witch, but I can. Theah's an old woman on Gwinnett Street with some cows. Othuh people don't know it, but she's the worse kind of witch. Not very long ago she came and rode a woman heah in Tin City and sucked uh blood.[69a] You ought to see that woman. She's so thin and weak she can't stand up."

"But isn't there some way to keep witches out?" we asked.

"Yes, you can lay a bruhmstick cross the doe befo night an they can't come in. A little salt is good. They don't take to salt."[69a]

Then he insisted on returning to the subject of his magic book. We evinced the proper interest and he showed us a strange recipe jotted down in almost illegible writing on the flyleaf of this book.

Eggs—2
carisin—1 pint
turpentine—1 pint
vinegar
cy pepper
table salt—1 box

"That's a cunjuh mixin," the old man explained. "I don't know what it's faw. It was in the book when Joe Fraser, a root doctuh,[48] gave it to me."

"Where is Joe Fraser?"

"He is dead these long yeahs. All the real old root doctuhs are passin on to the beyon." And Nathaniel Lewis sadly stroked his lame arm.

We left him standing in his garden and went on down the winding path. On each side, closed away behind their fences, stood the little houses of the town. One was made entirely of old signs; another was merely a battered automobile body

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*Yamacraw**

YAMACRAW TAKES ITS NAME FROM THE LITTLE INdian town that Tomochichi, chief and friend of General Oglethorpe, established on the Savannah River bluff west of the township of Savannah over two hundred years ago. Today waterfront industries have pushed the Negro district southward from the bluff, but it is still so close to the river that some of the small shanties rattle when winds roar across the water.

In this community the residents are drawn largely from coastal counties of Georgia and South Carolina. At one time an unruly element gained Yamacraw the reputation of being the toughest section of Savannah, but the presence of an unusual number of churches of various denominations seems to have improved law and order in recent years. Intense religious interest is aided by pride felt in the fact that the first Negro Baptist church in America was established here and also that Methodism gained an earlier start among Yamacraw Negroes than in any other part of the county.

In spite of the difference in religious doctrines there seem to be certain common beliefs handed down in families. We found an implicit and readily asserted faith in the power "tuh do unnatchul ting." Ghosts are everyday experiences. Root doctors are in constant demand.

* *Old Yamacraw has gone. Since late in 1939 there has been a radical physical change under the program of the Federal Housing Administration. Two thirds of the tumble-down brick houses and wooden shanties in the once crowded area have been replaced by modern concrete buildings with low rentals for Negro tenants.*

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Springfield

ROWS OF FADED GREY HOUSES, HUDDLED CLOSE TOgether and facing on narrow dirt lanes, house the population of Springfield, a Negro community lying west of Savannah near the city waterworks. In the neighborhood are several wooden churches of various denominations, a well constructed modern brick school building, and a number of stores that supply the six hundred odd Negroes of the community.

Many of the houses are shuttered, dim and quiet. So somber an atmosphere prevails that it is easy to imagine the spectral figures that the Negroes claim they see wandering at night along the twisting pathways. It is not surprising to be told of the sinister powers which are constantly at work and against which many inhabitants of this locality are always on guard.

A familiar figure in the neighborhood is James Washington,* famed locally as a fortune teller and root doctor. It is said that Washington's patronage is growing steadily; [22a, c, 48] each day new clients visit his dilapidated house, seeking advice or perhaps a cure for some puzzling ailment that has descended upon them.

The consulting room is smoky, airless, and reeking with a queer pungent odor. The shades are drawn down tightly, and when a visitor is being given advice the door is shut securely against intrusion. The furniture is scant, consisting of a lamp on a plain table, a couch for the visitor, and placed directly across the room a wooden armchair in which sits the dealer in magic. The most remarkable object in the room is

* *James Washington, Springfield.*

SPRINGFIELD

we would be woke up by a loud bangin noise. Ef we look out duh winduh we could see dis spirit. He wuz alluz wanduhin roun. Ebry now an den he would tro a rock at a ole gasoline tank an it would make dat noise we heah.[55] We alluz use tuh tink deah wuz buried treasure neah an dis spirit wuz gahdin it.[61] I nebuh did look fuh duh treasure, I dohn wahn tuh fool wid no spirits. Attuh a time dey tuk down duh house an duh spirit nebuh did come back no mo."

Another victim of conjure,* a Negro man of about eighty-eight, told us that although he did not usually believe superstitious tales, his own strange experience had forced him to realize that "folks kin fix yuh." "One time I fall down sick frum a puhculeyuh disease. Nuttn didn do no good till uh hab a root uhmun come in. Right away she tell me a enemy done put down a dose fuh me.[15] She say I wuz fined in fish. Well, den, she tell me tuh drink a haffuh pint uh wiskey and tro way duh udduh res uh duh pint. Attuh uh done dis, uh git well agen.[6]

"I knows a case uh fixin right now. It's a young man wut dohn lib fah frum yuh. He alluz complainin bout crickets crawlin unduh his skin an some uh duh neighbuhs say dey see um. I blieb dis mus be so cuz deah's a uhmun roun yuh wut kin make a han tuh put any kine uh insec in yuh body.[5] She kill duh insec an grine it tuh powduh an rub it on duh skin uh duh pusson aw gib it tuh um tuh drink. Wen it entuh duh body, it tun back intuh insec, sometime a lizud aw a frawg aw a snake."

The old man continued, "Ise had plenty sperience bout root wuk,[48] but I alluz try tuh keep way frum dat kine uh folks. I membuh ole Doctuh Sheppard who use tuh oppurate yuh. He hab hunduds uh folks come tuh him day an night. He mustuh been bery good.

"Deah wuz a uhmun name Clara an she wuz good too. She use tuh ketch lots uh Doctuh Sheppard's customuhs. I

* *Charles Singleton, Springfield.*

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791 759 went tuh uh house once. She show me a box full uh packages an she say dat ebry one wuz a han fuh diffrunt tings.[9b-9] I reach out tuh git hole ub em, but she stop me an say ef uh touch em, dey lose all duh powuh. Clara and Doctuh Sheppard bote dead now.

789 "Ise heahd lots uh stories bout folks wut could fly. Some time back I wuz libin in Woodville wen a man come tru deah. He wuz frum Liberty County. Dis man talk lot bout duh story uh duh Africans wut could fly. He say all dis wuz true. He say he wuz takin awduhs fuh wings an dey wuz all yuh need tuh fly. A peah uh wings coss twenty-five dolluhs. Duh man take yuh measure an a five dolluh deposit an say he collec duh balance wen he delibuh duh wings. Lots uh people gib deah awduh fuh wings, cuz all deah libes dey been heahin bout folks wut could fly. Duh man jis go roun takin awduhs an collectin five dolluhs. Das duh las any ub us ebuh heah uh duh man aw duh wings."

791 759 Clara Smith,* a resident of this community, told us that she too remembered the time when Dr. Sheppard and the woman called Clara, who it appeared was her aunt, had operated a thriving business. "I didn unduhstan much wut dey did," she said, "but dey wuz bote kep busy all uh dat time. Deah wuz alluz a long line uh folks waitin tuh see em.

"Dey say my Aunt Clara wuz bery good. She could wuk roots an gib good luck hans an tell fawchuns, and fix yuh enemies.

754 "One time a man come an git muh aunt. He say somebody cunjuh his wife.[15] She ack queah an run away an stay fuh days at a time. My aunt go tuh duh house an dig all roun. She fine a sack filled wid sulphuh, an haiah,[10] an matches, an grabeyahd dut.[9] Den she look in duh house an she fine mo sacks in duh mattress, in duh pilluh, an in duh dressuh draws. Deze cunjuh sacks wuz wut causin duh woman tuh [789] be crazy. My aunt destroy duh sacks an gie duh woman a

* *Clara Smith, 1139 East Duffy Street.*

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BROWNVILLE

Kum baba yano
Lai lai tambe
Ashi lai lai lai
Shi wali go
Dhun.

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789

In the heart of the thriving Brownville community live fortune tellers, root doctors, and vendors of magic charms who conduct flourishing businesses.[22a, c, 48] There is a ready market for their wares which are used for the various activities of daily living. Numerous perplexities pertaining to matters of business, luck, and love affairs are thought to be solved by the mere possession of certain charms.[8]

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Mattie Sampson,* a robust young Negro woman, told us that she does an active mail order business as representative of the Lucky Heart Company, the Sweet Georgia Brown Company, and the Curio Products Company. She supports herself comfortably by means of selling her credulous neighbors good luck perfumes, roots, lodestones, and similar charms. "Duh chahms an good luck puhfumes an powduhs do deah wuk independent of any additional hep," Mattie said. "Ef anybody believe a puticuluh chahm is wut dey need, well, dat chahm will do duh wuk."

"Mos of muh customuhs depen on special chahms tuh bring em good luck," the young woman continued. "Dey nevuh puhmit deah supply tuh give out but awduh it ovuh an ovuh. I have sevral bes selluhs. One is duh *Mystic Mojo Love Sachet*. Dis is sometimes call *Quick Love Powduh* an is guaranteed tuh make yuh populuh, successful, an happy. Yuh use it tuh attrac a pusson an tuh make dat pusson admyuh an love yuh. A lill uh dis powduh is wone in a bag aroun duh neck aw rubbed on duh body. But ef yuh prefuh, yuh kin sprinkle it in duh dressuh draw aw in duh bottom uh duh shoes.

* *Mattie Sampson, West 32nd Street.*

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"*Mystic Mojo Incense* is anudduh one uh muh bes selluhs. On duh box it says dis is duh same incense used by duh Hindus an Arabs an Tuks, an also duh Egyptians, an Chinese. In every box is five diffunt culluhs, each one fuh a diffunt puhpose." From a box which Mattie had on hand we took down the directions: "Work the magic spell now. Just hold *Mystic Mojo* in hand and light match to tip. Perfumed with rare fragrance and exotic sandalwood, myrrh and incense. Price 25¢. Sweet and strong."

Mattie also constantly reorders a product known as *Magnetic Lodestone in Holy Oil*. "Dis is used," she explained "tuh drive away evil spirits an bad luck an tuh bring yuh luck in love, an business, an gamblin games. Den deah's *Five Finguh Grass*. A lot uh duh people heah are sked of witches an spirits visitin em at night. Dey hang *Five Finguh Grass* ovuh deah bed aw doeway tuh protec duh whole house.[11] Some of em use *Black Cat Incense an Powduh*."

A few blocks from Mattie Sampson lives William Edwards * who follows the diverse trades of root doctor,[48] piano tuner, and watchman at a filling station. For a while the old man stubbornly insisted that, although he had been a popular root doctor in his younger days, he had not treated a patient in years. After a good deal of casual friendly conversation, he at length admitted that he was at present doctoring a man who had malaria. He also admitted that he was treating a cousin for an ailment and said that by the use of roots he had recently cured another patient of kidney trouble.

"Muh roots kin cuo mos any pains," he said earnestly. "I wuks on dogs too. I kin cuo a mad dog in lessn a day ef dey git tuh me in time. I make muh medicine frum King Physics. It grows on duh salts an is bery plentiful neah Montgomery, but yuh hab tuh know how tuh fine it.

"Duh spiduh is bote good and ebil an is useful tuh man.

* *William Edwards, corner West Broad and 32nd Streets.*

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I make a medicine out uh duh spiduh[5] by stooin eel skin in lahd wid it. Wen dis is done, I hab a saave dat will stop any kine uh pain. On duh iluns, specially St. Catherine, duh spiduh is hel in high regahd by some uh duh people.[53]

"I make muh medicine out uh King Physic root, an Indian Ash, an Tukish Wine. Wen I wuz a boy I lun many tings frum duh ole people bout herbs dat wuz good fuh diffunt ailments. Deuh wuzn so many doctuhs in dem days. We hab tuh fine remedies fuh our sickness an know how tuh cuo snake bite aw cuts an boils, eben female complaints. So I lun wut herbs tuh use fuh deze ailments too.

"I kin cuo any rattlesnake bite in twenty-fo hours. Duh remedy is King Physic, tuhpentine, an wiskey. Attuh duh pizen is kill, gib em plenty sweet milk an ebryting will be all right in twenty-fo hours.

"Duh spiduh web is good fuh stoppin duh blood wen anybody git cut. I make a saave by stooin physic vine leaves an talluh an spiduh tuhgedduh. Dis saave will relieve any bruise aw ole so. It draw all duh pizen out uh duh so.[48a, b]

"Tuh keep ghos away, missus, yuh hab tuh go in duh woods an fine a tree dat wuz strik by lightin, an git some uh duh bahk an put some unduh duh doe step an carry a piece in yuh pocket. No ghos would ebuh bodduh yuh agen. I done dat an ain been bodduh since. Now all yuh hab tuh do tuh keep witches frum ridin yuh is keep a Bible unduh yuh pilluh at night."[13]

Another root doctor * in the section told us that he had been born with a special knowledge of healing and had studied the science of herbs from the time he was a small boy.[48] Some of the herbs he uses in his mixtures are Golden Seal, Yellow Dust, Golden Thread, Hippo Root, Pink Root, Lady Slipper, Yellow Root, Blood Root, Rattlesnake Master, Black Snake Root, and John the Conqueror.

"I know in a dream," he said, "jis wen a patient is comin

* *George W. Little, 737 West 34th Street.*

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759 to consult me an I know head uh time zackly wut kine uh herbs tuh gadduh in awduh tuh cuo im."

787 He had been born with this power to foretell the future, he asserted.[22a,*] "Outside uh dreams," he went on, "I kin use leaves an coffee grouns an a suttn kine uh seed known as duh sensitive aw jumpin seed. Yuh fine deze seeds at suttn times long duh sho uh duh Wes Indies. Yuh hab tuh keep duh seeds in a closed containuh aw dey will jis disappeah. Tuh tell fawchuns yuh spread duh seeds out fo yuh on duh groun an dey'll moob bout. Dey moob cawdn tuh wut yuh tinkin. Tellin fawchuns is jis a mattuh uh concentratin yuh imagination on suttn tings. Den ebryting will appeah fo yuh."[22b-d]

754 Conjure is being practiced all the time, the root doctor informed us. "Frawgs an lizuds an sech tings is injected intuh people's bodies an duh people den fall ill an sometime die.[5, 15] Udduh strange tings is happenin, too. Take duh 789 story uh dem people wut fly back tuh Africa. Das all true. Yuh jis hab tuh possess magic knowledge tuh be able tuh cumplish dis.[69c] Not long ago I see a man vanish intuh tin eah by snappin his finguhs. Hab yuh heahd uh duh man wut wuz put in prison in Springfield? He jis flied away frum duh jail an wuz nebuh caught agen.[68b, 69c] Yes, ma'am, I know wut yuh hab tuh hab in awduh tuh fly aw vanish away, but it is mighty hahd tuh git. It's duh bone ub a black cat."

(115) A woman* informant, too, had heard about flying Africans and persons who could disappear at will.[69c] She said also that she had often been ridden by witches. "Dey seem tuh come frum noweah an staht chokin yuh.[69] Witches an root men hab duh same magic powuh."

764 Relative to the custom of placing food and possessions on a new grave this woman spoke earnestly. "Dis wuz a common ting wen I wuz young. Dey use tuh put duh tings a (775) pusson use las on duh grabe.[47] Dis wuz suppose tuh satisfy

* *Florence Postell, 928 West 51st Street.*

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Tatemville

EXTENDING SOUTHWEST FROM SAVANNAH OVER A widely scattered area is a section known locally as Tatemville. This settlement is inhabited largely by Negroes, some of whom are survivals of ante-bellum days.

It is interesting to note that a number of these old people in speaking of their fellow-slaves frequently prefix "Golla" to the given name.*

H. H. Miller,** an educated old man of this community, who has acquired considerable wealth, stated, "I knew many of the 'Golla' tribesmen who were brought to this country, when I was a boy. I think some can be found aroun these pahts now."

A palsied old man, William Newkirk,† who said he was born on the Newkirk place, obligingly replied to questions concerning root doctors and conjure, "Well, duh root doctuh wuz all we needed. Dey wuz bettuh dan duh doctuhs now-a-days. Deah wuzn all uh dis yuh cuttin an wen yuh sick, duh root doctuh would make some tea an gib yuh aw sumpm tuh rub wid an das all. Den fo yuh know it, yuh wuz all right.[48a] He would fix tings fuh yuh ef somebody done put sumpm down fuh yuh. Deah wuz many ways tuh wuk it. Sometime he would gib yuh sumpm tuh weah wid yuh aw sumpm tuh take." [6]

Spirits are a reality to Esther Jones,‡ obviously a woman

* *See Introduction.*
** *H. H. Miller 46th and Pearl Streets.*
† *William Newkirk, Tatemville.*
‡ *Esther Jones 308 West 46th Street.*

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777 356 duh flo git duhty agen by duh night time an yuh sweep duh flo, yuh musn sweep duh dut out duh house, but yuh hab tuh sweep it behine duh doe till mawnin.

(533) " 'Tis bad luck fuh girls tuh wistle. It will suttnly lead tuh misfawchun. Yuh should nevuh put noo bodes on a ole house but yuh should git a ole bode das good tuh men duh place dat yuh hab tuh fix. An nevuh put anudduh ruhm on a house das already buil. It sho mean bad luck, eeduh sickness aw det tuh some uh yuh fambly aw close friens, wen yuh heah duh owl holluh by yuh house.[44] Now yuh kin watch it. I ain see it fail yet."

777 825

436 789 The custom of spitting on money is a very old one, it seems. This, he explained, will cause it to "stick tuh yuh aw it will draw mo tuh yuh."

115 Strolling down the sandy road with an ax across his shoulder and a dog at his heels, Jack Waldburg * hastily removed his hat at the sight of us. He is of medium height and slightly bent; his hair and beard are quite gray but his sprightly appearance belies the eighty years he claims.

He greeted us cordially, listened attentively to what we had to say, and answered without hesitation.

"Yes, missis, I bawn an raise in dis paht uh duh country, down at Cherry Hill in Bryan County. But I bin libin roun yuh bout tutty yeahs. Muh gran wuz a African. Das weah he come frum an he name wuz Buck Waldburg. He dahk in culluh an medium high wid strong buil. He hab long haiah. But granmudduh, she from deah, too, an she feah. She duh one wut lun me tuh make medicine frum root.[45b] She a midwife an tell me duh kine tuh use. I dohn make it no mo cuz I ain got a license."

(759)

754 We asked if conjure were practiced by root men.

759 "No'm, I dohn know nuttn bout cunjuh. Some folks say dey kin wuk it but it bad an I dohn fool wid um.

787 "Now spirits is diffunt. Deah is good un an bad un.[45a]

* *Jack Waldburg, Tatemville.*

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TATEMVILLE

I caahn see um but uh feels um. Sometime wen folks is comin tuh me I kin tell dey comin fo I see um, an wen yuh die yuh head tun backwud.[57] Soon's yuh die it tun roun.

"Duh folks frum Africa could see um. Dey natchul bawn dat way. An wite dogs![46] Dey alluz kin see spirit. Muh brudduh Simon he bawn wid a caul an he see um an play wid um.[4] Dey would climb trees an he climb attuh um so muh mudduh give um some tea made frum caul uh women an bline um tuh um."

We endeavored to gain some information as to the ingredients of this tea but the only explanation was that the concoction was more effective when made from cauls of women.

He could remember nothing as to the use of drums at funerals or other gatherings but his eyes twinkled when we turned the conversation to a culinary line.

"Ma would make ash cake," he recalled. "She would mix duh cawnmeal, den open duh oak ashes an spread in some hickory leaves, den put duh cawnmeal on duh leabes an cubbuh wid mo leabes, den put duh hot ashes an coals on duh top. Wen it done, she take duh bread frum duh ashes an rub it wid a rough clawt aw brush an it would be pretty an brown. Dis," he concluded smacking his lips, "wuz bery fine wid fat meat aw surup."

Justine Singleton * believed firmly in the existence of spirits as verified by her statement. "Yes, wen I wuz sick muh sistuh das dead come tuh me an I knowd dat it wuz huh an she done talk tuh me. She tole me tuh git some weepin willuh an bile it an make a wash fuh muh feet." This, she explained is an excellent remedy for foot ailments. "I done talk tuh duh spirits many times. Sometime I gib em sumpm. I caahn tell yuh no mo now cuz I caahn git muh mine tuhgedduh."

In this locality stands a small one-room structure occu-

* *Justine Singleton, Tatemville.*

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pied by an old man and his dog, between whom there is a touching devotion. In addition to other means of livelihood, he follows the profession of root doctor. "I kin cuo any kine uh sickness das put on yuh. An," he added, "I kin tell wut a man want. Soon's uh see im his spirit come tuh me. I lay down an sleep an know wen somebody want me. Deah spirit come an wake me. Many times uh go an fine em lookin fuh me."

This man, whose name is Allen Parker * is unusually adept with his hands, as shown by his skill in mending clocks, watches, and firearms, in making chairs, baskets, piggins, bread trays, spoons and forks,[70d] and in carving figures of such animals as snakes, lizards, frogs, dogs, alligators and rabbits.[50b]

In reference to native Africans, he declared that he had known many of them but that few were left in this vicinity although he thought some might be found around Darien.

It was with difficulty that Rosanna Williams ** was persuaded to talk. She was suspicious and reticent and lived behind tightly locked doors in a house that to all appearance was deserted. After much coaxing she cast aside some of her mistrust and grudgingly responded to our friendly gestures.

"Muh name is Rosanna Williams. Muh pa wuz Lonnon Dennerson. He frum duh ole country. Muh granpa wuz 'Golla' Dennerson, King uh his tribe. Wen muh pa wuz a lill boy, him an muh granpa wuz fool away wid a red hankuhchuh. Dey wuz sole tuh Chahls Grant on one uh duh iluns roun Brunswick. Muh pa wuz six foot tall an on is furud wuz a scah bout dis big." [14] She indicated the end of her forefinger.

We questioned her more closely regarding this mark which

* *Allen Parker, Tatemville.*
** *Rosanna Williams, Tatemville.*

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757 824 "Duh wite root," pointing to a wild shrub, "dey use fuh stomach troubles. Buttuh root an palmettuh root an May apple, yuh bile tuhgedduh wid a quawt uh watuh till it simmuh down tuh haf uh pint, den yuh add some cawn wisky. Dat a fambly tonic tuh buil yuh up."

777 [784] Sophie went on to tell us something about the beliefs prevailing in the neighborhood. "Ef some relative is sick, yuh dohn nebuh deah tuh sew on a gahment wut yuh is weahin cuz dat put a spell on duh sick un an dey mos liable tuh die.[49] Deah's anudduh ting too. Yuh sho bettuh not steal tings frum a grabe.[64] I sho know I wouldn. Deah's jis a lot uh udduh tings bout bad luck too. One sho sign is dat [827] ef a pusson sneeze wile dey's eatin long, dat is, dey hab food in dey mout, den dey got tuh put it out lessn dey hab bad [825] luck.[52] Anudduh sign is duh hootin ub a owl."[44]

754 A strange look of doubt and amusement came into Sophie's eyes at the mention of conjuring. She smiled and slowly shook her head.

"I heahd ub a few cases weah dey say one uh duh neighbuhs cunjuh anudduh,[15] but fuh duh mos paht dey all gits long all right. Das cuz we's all Christians an dohn put no faith much in dem kine uh tings. Dey say dat a powuhful chahm kin be made frum grabeyahd dut[9] fuh cunjuhin puhposes, but duh pusson dat git duh dut mus put some pennies on duh grabe, else he hab trouble hissef. Nebuh let a enemy git any ub yuh haiah wut bin cut off aw yuh nail clippins. Ef he git deze he kin make sumpm dat will cause [826] lot uh trouble.[10] I kin tell yuh sumpm else bout duh haiah [825] too. Ef a bud gits duh haiah, yuh'll hab a headache soon.

754 "Now Uncle John Bowen on St. Catherines he wuz a root man an one time a man come tuh him tuh git somebody fix. 759 Uncle John he wuz fixin tings tuh linguh um, an duh man sit on duh cheah weah he hab duh cunjuh tings an Uncle John he git so mad he git right up an fix duh cunjuh right now so dat man wut awduh duh fixin die hesef. He fix lot

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uh people. Deah so much debilment in ole Uncle John Bowen dat finally he eat out hesef till he fix hesef an die."

We asked about the use of drums.

"Yes'm, dey alluz use tuh beat duh drum wen somebody die tuh let duh udduh folks know bout duh det. An at fewnuls too, dey beat it."

Relative to spirits, she replied, "No'm, I caahn see spirits cuz I ain bawn wid a caul. But now Bob Delegal he knows spirits. Down on Blackbeard Ilun, deah wuz a big hawg wut wuz a ebil spirit. Dey call um Blackbeard an dey try an try tuh kill um. So ole Bob Delegal cut up some silbuh an put it in he gun. He aim at duh hawg but he miss um an ole Bob Delegal fall down an couldn speak. Dey carry um home an he nebuh did talk no mo an duh nex day he die."

According to Sophie the old people on St. Catherines would pray at the rising and at the setting of the sun and at the conclusion of their prayers they would say the words "Meena, Mina, Mo." Asked if she knew the meaning of these words, she shook her head negatively.

"Yuh know, Susie Branch, who lib jis cross duh road deah, could tell yuh some uh deze tings too. We wuz chillun tuhgedduh down on St. Catherines Ilun. I gwine call uh."

In a moment Susie * arrived. Tall and thin, she was dressed in a red, green, and blue cotton plaid skirt and a man's shirt with the tail hanging loosely outside. She was very talkative and was enthusiastic in verifying many of the things that Sophie had mentioned.

Susie listened gravely as we inquired about her recollections of the old people in her family. She told us the following story: "Dey steal muh great-great-gran, uh name wuz Sukey, frum off duh beach in Africa wen she wuz a young miss. I dunno wut paht ub Africa she come frum. She alluz say she come frum Africa, duh country weah dey dohn weah no cloze. At duh plantation at St. Catherines she wuz

* *Susie Branch, White Bluff.*

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115 Lunnon * remembered a great deal about the old customs. Seated in his front yard under the shade of a crepe myrtle tree, he and Prince Sneed were chatting. Lunnon's hair was [730] snow white and wooly. On his left ear was a gold earring, [751] which he claimed tended to improve his eyesight.[37] When he laughed he bent double and slapped his knees with his hands; at the same time his mouth opened wide, revealing his three remaining teeth. At first he was reluctant to admit that he 115 had heard much about conjuring. He finally admitted, be- 754 tween chuckles, that he had heard about it from his mother and grandmother but vehemently denied any belief in conjure himself. He was serious, however, as he told the following story about Prince Sneed's father-in-law, who was being conjured at the time.

754 "I lib in White Bluff fuh bout fifty yeahs, an I kin tell yuh many stories I heahd bout cunjuhin an root doctuhs. Somebody heahbouts put an ebil spell on Prince Sneed's fathuh-in-law, Lunnon Milton.[15] He seem tuh git wus an wus an nuttn seem tuh hep him none. Finally he sen fuh a [759] root doctuh an he wuk obuh im but he dohn git no bettuh.[48] He call in eight ub um altuhgedduh, but dey dohn seem able tuh countuhrack dat cunjuh.[6] Duh ole man sick tuh dis day. Maybe some day he fine a root doctuh wut is powful nuff tuh hep him." [48]

115 As Uncle Lunnon finished his story, Prince Sneed,** a dark man of splendid physique despite his sixty-odd years, [758] added, "It's lak dis. Wen Ise sick, I gonuh see a doctuh [759] right away. Now muh faduh-in-law, he jis keep on wid dem root doctuhs, but he say he ain gittin a bit bettuh."

Prince proved to be an interesting talker, much of his knowledge having been gleaned from conversations by the fireside with his grandfather. The following narrative was still fresh in his memory:

* *London Grayson, White Bluff. Deceased November, 1939.*
** *Prince Sneed, White Bluff.*

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123 771 754 cunjuh." When pressed for details, however, and when assured that the interviewers' interest was a friendly one, their attitude frequently changed and they talked volubly of queer happenings in the vicinity.

754 (115) "They jis don't think bout nuthin but cunjuh," said one woman, a newcomer in the neighborhood.* "Yuh heah all the time of folks havin spells put on em an findin cunjuh bags buried in the yahd. All the times some folks are fixin othuhs.[15]

777 754 "A woman that lived in Homestead Park jis couldn't seem to have nothin but bad luck. She thought maybe an enemy had cunjuhed uh, so she looked in the yahd an sho nough theah wuz a cunjuh bag. It wuz a queah lookin bundle with a lot of brown clay in it. She destroyed the bag an the bad luck stopped an the evil spirits didn't bothuh uh none."

753 825 A small child complained to his parents that he felt snakes moving about in his head.[5, 50] A local doctor diagnosed the illness as ringworm, but this explanation failed to satisfy the parents for the child's own theory of snakes seemed to them much more convincing. One morning, soon after, the mother discovered a large snake crawling about in front of the house. She killed the snake and the next day the inflamed places on the boy's head began to heal. In a few days he was completely cured.**

754 789 (759) (777) Professional witch doctors and root doctors [48] ply an active trade and are employed in the more extreme cases, but often the people take matters in their own hands and by means of conjure bags and charms seek to alter their own destinies and those of their neighbors. Retribution is brought to bear on an enemy, the favor of a loved one is gained, and luck in business or in games of chance is assured by the possession of some sort of luck charm or powder.[8]

* *Lizzie Jenkins, Sandfly.*
That this informant came from another section of Georgia was reflected in her speech.
** *Ophelia Baker, Baker's Crossing*

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534 drum an fife an we made duh drum frum holluh beehive
[533] lawg.[25b] I tell yuh how we done it. Yuh cut duh lawg an tak a deah hide an stretch obuh duh hole. Den yuh cut a hoop ban dat could lock roun duh lawg. Den yuh cut strips uh deah hide an make bans tuh hole duh head cuvvuh tight. How yuh make duh fife? Well, yuh jis cut reed cane.

322 "Lots uh udduh tings we make our ownsef," said the old
[283] man. "All duh fishin cawd made out uh deah hide, and we make mos uh duh house needs sech as cheahs an tables, baskets an buckets an stools, an sometime spoons an beds and cubbuds. Oh, deah's much I caahn tell off han."

115 Jackson's wife, who was not many years past middle age, came in about this time, greeted us, and sat down to listen.

787 "Wut dis bout signs?" Jackson laughed. "Sho I knows
825 a few. Deah's some dat foetell wut comin. Wen yuh see duh hawgs bring straw in deah mouf, it's a sho sign wintuh goin tuh be cole. Ef duh roostuh come in duh doe an crow an den go out, it's sho sign uh sorruh in dat house. Duh owl is
[763] a true messenjuh uh det,[44] an wen yuh see a bunch uh crows flock up, yuh jis watch out fuh a fewnul. Deah's many signs an wunduhs. Duh Bible tell us so. I had a buckeye
789 fuh many yeahs dat keep off bad luck. I use tuh have a hawse shoe ovuh duh doe uh duh ole house wut bun down,[11a] but I ain put one on dis un yet.

755 "Rootn?" he shook his head disdainfully. "I seen duh root man say he tak wuhrums an pins an tings out uh people, but I belieb it's some trick. I ain got no fait in dat stuff."

754 "But I have," put in his wife.* "Muh brothuh-in-law wuz fixed by his wife.[15] Not muh sistuh but anothuh woman. He tun intuh a invalid an laid down helpless fuh twenny-five yeahs. None uh the medical doctuhs couldn hep im, an sev-
[759] ral root doctuhs wuz called in.[48a] One of um said nuthin
[758] couldn be done fuh im cuz the pusson that put im in this fix wuz dead an theah wuzn nobody tuh throw it back tuh. So

* *Della Jackson, Grimball's Point.*

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775 776 were informed that a variety of spirits were said to be seen on the island. These, it seemed, took different sizes and shapes and frequently appeared to the local residents.[54, 55, 59]

"Sometimes," said Celia, "doze spirits put spells on yuh, fix yuh."

754 "Spirits ain duh only ones," added Peter McQueen. "Folks kin wuk wid cunjuh too.[15] Ain dasso, Uncle Robert?"

"Dasso," Uncle Robert nodded sagely. "Muh own brud-duh wuz cunjuhed. He hab a spell put on um. He hab fits all duh time—hydrophobical fits—act lak he crazy. Nuttn we do hep im, an attuh a few yeahs he die."

754 789 "Only ting yuh kin do tuh keep frum bein cunjuhed is tuh carry a han," said Peter. "Mos folks tote a han wid um."[8, 12, a, c, d]

"Plenty folks kin fix yuh wid a han dey make deysef," said another voice.

754 "What are the charms made of?" we wanted to know.

"Haiah," "Nails," [10] "Frum duh cloze" were the various responses and Celia enlarged on this information. "Ef yuh hab a enemy, nebuh let um git a piece uh yuh cloze. An yuh bun yuh haiah an yuh nail parins. Dey kin sho make pow-uhful han frum deze."

We inquired if many persons made a profession of this, and Peter informed us, "Sometimes dey git um frum a root doctuh."[8c, d, 48]

• 759 789 "Duh root doctuh kin hep yuh too," added Uncle Robert. "Dey is powful smaht. I use tuh heah tell ub a root man name Smaht McCall.[6, 48] Ef yuh git in any trouble, yuh jis go see um an he git yuh out ub it. Deah wuz a man wut got rested. He wuz plenty skeah bout wut would happen tuh um. He go see Smaht McCall an Smaht say not tuh worry cuz he would hep um. Duh day uh duh trial come an wen dey try duh case, a buzzud fly in duh cote house win-duh.[68b] He fly roun. Den he light on duh jedge desk. Well,

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759 789 suh, wid dat buzzud deah duh jedge jis couldn do nuttn. He jis had tuh pick up an go. Duh case wuz dismissed."

"Tell bout wut Smaht McCall done tuh Doctuh Rogers," 754 requested Uncle Jack.

759 "Well, Doctuh Rogers, he wuz a regluh doctuh an sometime duh folks would go tuh see um wen dey git sick stead ub goin tuh Smaht McCall. Smaht, he git mad. He say he fix dis Doctuh Rogers. He put a spell on duh hawse. Wen Doctuh Rogers go out nex time an git in he carriage, duh hawse run right intuh a tree an Doctuh Rogers git kill." [15]

759 As an afterthought he finished with, "Sometime deze root doctuhs is smahtuhn duh regluh doctuhs. Long time ago a doctuh tell me I hab tuh stop eatin meat. He say it ain good fuh me an ef uh eat it, I git sickn die. I bin eatin it ebuh sence an Ise still alibe. Dat doctuh bin dead fuh yeahs. Mos deze root doctuhs knows plenty; dey know nuff tuh lib."

262 There were a number of palmetto trees in the section and we asked if any of the people had ever heard of eating palmetto cabbage.

"Yes'm," they answered.

"Palmettuh cabbages is good eatin."

"Yuh kin jis cut it up an eat it raw an yuh kin cook it up wid fat meat," Uncle Robert told us.

273 "Yuh kin make good palm wine outuh duh berries," volunteered Peter McQueen.[45]

538 Various members of the party asked Peter McQueen to tell one of the numerous stories about Brer Rabbit and Brer Wolf. Peter pondered for a minute; then he started:

539 "Bruh Rabbit and Bruh Wolf wuz alluz tryin tuh git duh bes uh one anudduh. Now Bruh Wolf he own a hoe an it wuk fuh crop all by itsef.[39] Bruh Wolf jis say, 'Swish,' tuh it. Den he sit down in duh fiel an duh hoe do all duh wuk.

"Bruh Rabbit he wahn dat hoe. He hide behine bush an watch how duh wolf make it wuk. One day wen duh wolf

789 juh on em too. They's made of haiah, an nails,[10] an grave-
754 yahd dut,[9] sometimes from pieces of cloth an string. They tie em all up in a lill bag. Some of em weahs it roun the wrist, some of em weahs it roun the neck,[11b] an some weahs a dime on the ankle. Then ef somebody put down cunjuh fuh em it tun black an [12a, c, d] they git anothuh one tuh wawd off the evil.[6] Some of em has a frizzled chicken in the yahd. People do say they kin dig up cunjuh an keep it frum wukin gense yuh.[12a]

754 "Yuh 'eah all the time bout folks wut is cunjuhed. They gits crippled up an ef they dohn do nuthin bout it, some of em dies." [15]

795 We asked if river baptisms were still held in the section
796 and Liza answered, "Yes'm, they hole the baptisms right down yonduh in the rivuh. They always hole em on the ebb
[783] tide; that's so the sins be washed away. All the pruhcession mahch down tuh the rivuh. The preachuh leads the way. Fus the preachuh stan on the bank an pray. Then he take
[782] the candidates one by one an dip em in the watuh. Then he
[783] make a prayuh fuh the rivuh tuh wash away the sins.[13] I call that prayuh 'the matrinal.' "

Liza was unable to explain just what this term meant, but she said it was always applied to the prayer to the river.
764 She told us, too, that "settin-ups" were held for those who died and that the mourners sat up all night with the body
[533] and sang and prayed. "In the ole days they always use tuh beat the drum at the funeral an they still does it tuhday. As they take the body tuh the graveyahd, they beat the drum as they move long.[24] They put the body in the grave. Then they mahch roun an sing an beat the drum."

759 We had been told that several midwives rendered services to those residing in the section. We asked Liza about this and she told us, "Anna Johnson, she's my sistuh. She's a midwife an she tends tuh lots of folks roun heah. Those
[755] midwifes sho knows wut tuh do.[48] They use a shahp knife

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759 755 aw sizzuhs tuh cut the pain. Once wen I wuz in pain a midwife put a peah of sizzuhs unduh muh pilluh. All of a sudden the pain stop right quick. The pain wuz cut right off." 12b

115 Josephine Stephens,* one of the older residents of the island, lived a short distance from Liza Basden. Her house was set back several hundred yards from the highway in the midst of a large field. There was no pathway and in order to get to the house we had to cut directly through the field. As we neared the gate at the front of the house a tall gaunt woman, who we learned was Josephine's daughter, ran to meet us. It appeared that the mother had been ill for some time past and the younger woman had been caring for her.

As we talked with Josephine, the daughter stood in an adjoining room, ironing clothes. She stopped every now and then to take part in the conversation. The two women were utterly different types. Josephine, dressed becomingly in (291) a blue and white checked gingham outfit, was the antebellum type of Negro. The daughter, tall, thin and dashing, and probably in her forties, represented a more modern era. She had on a blue checked sport shirt, a white skirt upon the surface of which was the dim outline of the trade name of a flour mill, and a pair of shiny black satin bedroom slippers. Her two front teeth were gold and shone and sparkled as she (301) talked. Two large gold hoop earrings dangled beneath her close cropped straightened hair.

"I bin wukin ovuh at St. Simon," she explained to us. "Befo that I had a good job up Nawth. My mothuh git sick tho, an she need me tuh take keah of huh. That's why I come heah an stay. She gittin tuh be long in yeahs an caahn do so well by uhsef."

The mother did not know exactly how old she was but said she had been about fourteen at the close of the War between the States. We questioned her about her recollections of

* *Josephine Stephens, Harris Neck.*

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527 crops. We all gib tanks fuh duh crop an we dance an sing." [38]

115 Shortly after this she again fell to mumbling and muttering unintelligibly and seemed unwilling to be drawn again into the conversation. She did confide in us that she had lived in her house for over fifty-eight years and she proudly displayed her immaculate blue outfit which she said her daughter had recently purchased for her. As it was growing late and we had other interviews to obtain in the vicinity, we concluded our visit. The two women urged us to return soon. Setting out again to make an uncertain jagged path across the field, we looked back and saw Josephine, a rather tragic tall figure huddled at the end of the porch. The daughter waved gaily. Her gold earrings glinted in the sun.

When we found Anna Johnson,* she was standing in the front yard of Ed Thorpe's talking with a tall middle-aged woman who, we later learned, was Rosa Sallins,** her niece and Liza Basden's daughter.

• 759 The two women walked over to the car and greeted us. We inquired about the various methods the midwife employed
755 and she said, "Tuh cut a pain yuh use a shahp instrument, lak a knife, aw a peah of sizzuhs. Yuh put it unduh duh pilluh on duh bed. Duh pusson who is sick musn see yuh do it aw it wohn wuk. Sometime yuh use a smoothin ion. Dat cut duh pain too." [12b]

775 Rosa, who had been rather impatiently waiting an op-
845 portunity to speak, now offered, "Lots ub duh chillun bawn wid a caul. Ef dey is bawn wid a caul, dey kin see spirits." [4]

787 The midwife looked solemn. "Folks hab tuh be mighty keahful wen duh chile is bawn lak dat. Ef dey dohn do sumpm bout it, duh chile will be hanted all its life. It'll alluz be fraid uh ghos." [59]

* *Anna Johnson, Harris Neck.*
** *Rosa Sallins, Harris Neck.*

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115 might be, we asked Uncle Ben how often he went to town.
361 He shook his head slowly. "We dohn nebuh go tuh duh
829 road," he said. "We got ebryting we needs right yuh."

Aunt Sarah nodded her gray head in agreement. "Seems lak we libed yuh fuh mos ub our libes," she stated simply. "We built deze houses wen we fus come yuh. All duh chillun wuz raise yuh an we nebuh take up no time wid duh folks on duh outside. Nebuh did set no sto by mixin wid strainjuhs an sech doins."

Incredible as it seemed, they were speaking the truth. For half a century they had lived in this isolated spot, only a few miles from a frequently traversed highway.

754 Despite their evident liking for solitude the old couple were not averse to answering our questions. "Is there much conjure and magic around here, Uncle Ben?" we asked.

"I heah tell uh tings lak dat," he answered and looked up with a sly quizzical smile. "Ise heahd bout bein cunjuhed an I know fuh true deah's sech tings as magic." Uncle Ben chuckled, "Ef yuh ebuh see a cross mahk in duh road, yuh nebuh walk obuh it. Das real magic. Yuh hab tuh go roun it. It's put deah by a enemy an ef yuh walks cross it, duh ebil spell will cause yuh hahm.[15] Duh cross is a magic sign an hab tuh do wid duh spirits."

• [759] "Ef dat happens," said Aunt Sarah, "reckon bout duh only ting yuh could do would be tuh see a root doctuh.[40] He gib yuh sumpm wut cuos yuh."[6]

[789] Uncle Ben turned to us. "Lots uh folks carry hans all duh time an dis bring em luck an keep duh ebil spirits away."[8, 12a, c, d]

[789] The old man seemed unable to describe these good luck charms, but he was more successful in describing the charms used in conjuring an enemy.

"Dey is made mosly frum haiah aw nails an lots uh times duh dus frum yuh foot track," he said.[7]

Aunt Sarah's face darkened. "Ain nobody git my haiah"

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754 she declared. "I buns it so nobody kin wuk hahm wid it." [10]

[777] Young Reuben spoke up. "Ef yuh weahs a silvuh coin, it
[789] brings yuh good luck," he stated doggedly. "An ef any body cunjuh yuh aw wuk gense yuh, duh money tun black an yuh know yuh hab tuh do sumpm bout it fo duh cunjuh wuks." [12a, c, d]

"Did you ever see anyone who was conjured?" we asked. All three nodded solemnly.

Uncle Ben spoke first. "Dey's mosly all crippled up an caahn moob bout. Ef dey dohn do nuttn, duh cunjuh gits wus an dey dies." [15]

[753] "Folks wut is cunjuhed hab snakes in em an sometimes
[825] frawgs.[5] Yuh kin see em moobin roun in deah bodies," vol-
[759] unteered Reuben. "Wen dey visit duh root doctuh [48] an he wuks obuh em, den dey's jis as good as noo."

"Some folks roun bout say dey sees spirits," added Uncle
775 Ben. "Dey calls em plat-eye, cuz dey hab jis one big eye
776 hangin out in front.[62] I dohn fool roun wid sech tings fuh dey's sho bad luck."

775 "In some places the people told us that dead people's spirits returned to earth. Is that true here?" we asked.

Aunt Sarah speculated. She wagged her black-bonneted head until her brass earrings jangled. Finally she offered,
775 "I dohn guess yuh be bodduh much by duh spirits ef yuh
764 gib em a good fewnul [36] an put duh tings wut belong tuh em on top uh duh grave." [47]

Uncle Ben helped with this explanation. "Yuh puts all duh tings wut dey use las, lak duh dishes an duh medicine bottle. Duh spirits need deze same as duh man. Den duh spirit res an dohn wanduh bout."

764 Aunt Sarah said that they went to set-ups and that in the
782 old days, after the mourners had arrived, a chicken was killed.[35, 37b, c] Neither Aunt Sarah nor Uncle Ben, however, knew the reason for this.

789 Catching sight of a few crudely made farm implements

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796 singing was enhanced by the fervor and the earnest simplicity
533 with which it was presented. Shining countenances raised heavenward, voices lifted exultantly, and feet beating rhythmically in accompaniment, the congregation entered wholeheartedly into the singing and seemed oblivious of everything else.

538 The next day on the boat returning to the mainland, Smith, young and well educated, tried to remember some of the tales told him when he was a boy. They were mostly the better known ones, except the Fox and the Rabbit, which concerned the Fox thriftily planting sweet potatoes and the Rabbit digging them up.

763 Prevalent beliefs covered wider ground. If an owl hoots
825 on top of the house or near the house, it is supposed to be a
789 sign of death.[44] A counteractive is to throw salt on the fire, burn an old shoe, or turn pockets wrong side out. If a rooster comes upon the porch and starts crowing, it is a sign of death in the house.[13b] It is also considered bad luck
484 to start on a journey and have to turn back. The method
777 employed to ward off disaster is to draw a cross where you
784 turned back and spit on it. We were told that most of the
• 759 island Negroes believed in root doctors, but that they imported them from the mainland. There were none on the island.

775 Smith admitted that he knew very little about the Negroes' belief in spirits. He did know that if a person had something that the spirit wanted very badly that person would be haunted by the spirit.

231 A frizzled chicken is known as a wise chicken and is used
825 to find lost articles. If something has been buried and its place forgotten, a frizzled chicken can, according to the islanders, find the place and scratch up the lost article.[13a]

821 Smith remembered hearing the older Negroes tell of having
796 watches on certain definite occasions when they sat up all night waiting for sunrise. When the sun at last appeared

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115 this country on the *Wanderer* in 1858, is a nice looking, middle-aged woman, pleasant and up to date. She told us about her father.

"I wuz bery lill wen he died—not mone bout fo yeah ole, uh spec. I do know he come frum Africa. I membuhs dat an uh membuh muh Uncle Slaughtuh wuz his brothuh an he come frum Africa, too. I nebuh heahd him talk much bout it but maybe uh wuz too lill tuh membuh."

Although she had been so young at the time of her father's death, the woman still retained a vivid picture of him and she gave us the following description:

"He wuz shawt an dahk, an heaby buil. Yuh see, he wuzn but bout sixty yeah ole wen he died. Muh mothuh wuz Charity Lewis an uh got one brothuh, Caesar Prince, but he's younguh dan me an dohn membuh nothin."

From Nora's we went to the old tabby slave house of Floyd White * who was related to her. Floyd was of middle height, black, and of a powerful build. When we were uncertain and groping as to the right questions to ask, Floyd was clear and helpful.

829 "Ise nephew tuh Charity Lewis, so Nora is muh cousin, but Ise olduhn Nora an I membuh ole Tom Floyd well. I bout fifteen wen he die. He wuz shawt an tick set. I tinks he wuz Ibo. He used tuh whoop an holluh. He say dey do da way in Africa. He wuz doctuh too an he could cut yuh wid a knife an cop yuh. I wish he wuz yuh right now tuh cop me. I sho needs it an it make yuh feel lots bettuh."[48] I heah him talk plenty bout Africa but I caahn membuh so much ub it cuz uh wuz young boy den. He say he lib in a hut on a ribbuh an dey eat coconut an bread wut grow on a tree. Dey plant yam ebry seben yeah an dey dohn hadduh wuk it. Dey hab peanut an banana. He call it by anudduh name but I caahn membuh it. I seen plenty ub African peo-

[759]

* *Floyd White, St. Simons Island.*

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ple an dey all say dey plant duh crop an dey dohn hadduh wuk it. I heah lot ub em tell how dey git obuh yuh. Dey trap em on a boat wid a red flag."

Old Tom Floyd was not the only root doctor Floyd could remember. There were many others, he said, some still living and plying their trade.[48]

"I knows a root makuh now," he told us. "Uncle Quawt, he root makuh. Does yuh know him?"

We replied that we had known Quarterman for some time but that he had never told us he could work roots.

"Maybe he ain tell yuh but he kin wuk em all right.[48] He kin put a cunjuh on wid a goofa bag as good as anybody. Now, I tell yuh bout im. Deah's two felluhs in Brunswick wut does a lill killin an wen duh case is call, two buzzud light on duh cote house an wen duh men come up befo duh jedge, he let um go free. Now, Uncle Quawt, he had sumpm tuh do wid dat. Dey ain so many root makuhs lef."

Floyd, too, had heard of Alexander, the old African root maker.

"Yes'm, Ise heahd much bout im. He wuz still libin wen I wuz a boy. Ise heahd em tell plenty uh tales bout im. Dey say duh boat leab fuh Savannah an Alexanduh he yuh. He say good-bye frum yuh an tell em tuh go on widout im but he say he see em deah an wen duh boat git tuh Savannah, Alexanduh he in Savannah on duh dock tuh ketch duh line."

Pleasant memories associated with the social activities of the past caused Floyd to ponder abstractedly for a time. Finally he roused himself and told us, "We use tuh dance roun tuh a drum an a rattle goad. Dey could make good drum frum hawg an bass drum frum cow.[25] Doze days dey ain only beat duh drum fuh dancin; dey beat it on duh way tuh duh grabe yahd.[24] Dat wuz fuh duh det mahch wen dey use tuh carry duh body in a wagon. Dey hab lot uh singin den too an dey hab singin at duh baptizin. Den dey baptize em in duh ribbuh jis lak dey does now. Dey sing wid all duh

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guiding potential Christian converts through the "seekin' " experience just as Poro and Sande leaders conducted the neophytes through the "bush" experience.[25]

A second group of leaders worked on the periphery of Christianity. These "doctors" or "conjurers" were highly regarded by Africans and by African-Americans tied to their past while also creating a present. Some resembled the African specialists, in Kikongo the *nganga*, practitioners of *minkisi*. Yet others practiced *kindoki*, and brought evil. For if *Nzambi* and the ancestors set the limits of human possibility, and gave humans countermeasures against catastrophic forces, this influence was not always successful. The sorcerer *ndoki* brought chaos, disorder, sterilization of nature, and even death. Hence we fine among the Gullahs the belief in conjuration and in witches of human form who brought evil via mystical actions, and in root "doctors" and healers who worked for the forces of good.

As Christianity crusaded through the slave quarters during the last generation bondage, another type of major leadership is identified as having a commanding influence upon the Gullahs. These plantation meeting house elders, chosen by whites, were the last group to develop. As spiritual parents, root doctors, and conjurers were a bridge between old and new traditions, with accentuation of the former, the "praise house watchmen" were the embodiment of creative forces that congealed past and present into something exceptional. But the new leadership, unlike the old, was probably more definitely in alignment with the new religion. Still black elders were pillars of strength in the slave quarters, and often above reproach among the members of the socioreligious communities.[26]

Association with African traditions obviously weakened, first in wake of new circumstances and later due to the power and appeal of the new religion. Yet while many elements of Africanity disappeared, other beliefs and customs took on new forms. Some features basic to traditional experience and thought outlived the capture, homeland enslavement, Middle Passage, and Protestant influence. African religious orientation was fundamental to early ethnic groups brought to the Sea Islands and coastal Lowcountry. Additionally, in the process of community-building, a cosmology significant in traditional African societies formed another basis of the Gullah world view and spirituality. A sacred concept of reality and of the universe not only explained natural and supernatural phenomena for Africans, but fashioned notions about human relation-

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and taking possession of them. Among the BaKongo, the curse of the dying is much dreaded, especially that of a relative, for the deceased will soon enter the spirit world. A dying person may admonish those around to take care of his or her affairs. "If you do not, I shall fetch you, and you will not become old here on earth." The dying one may also request the living to "wrap me well in the cloth that I leave," may insist that the living hold many lamentations after the death and care for the deceased's family. If not properly buried, the deceased might bring *kindoki* (evil).[12]

A curious example of the application of both African and Christian practices among the slaves is provided by a former South Carolina bondsman. According to the informant, a good-looking and very popular slave girl named Mary became ill and died after a lingering illness of four or six months' duration. The slaves on the surrounding plantations were sure that Mary had been conjured (poisoned) by a rival in a love triangle. The plantation proprietor, a Methodist minister, had Mary treated by his brother, a practicing physician. While the doctor was attending Mary, the slaves appealed to their own doctor, a plantation slave who also treated the young woman. But Mary died, and, according to the author, her funeral, which as was traditional took place at night, "was the largest ever held in all that region of the country":

> The coffin, a rough home-made affair, was placed upon a cart, which was drawn by an old Gray, and the multitudes formed in a line in the rear, marching two deep. The procession was something like a quarter of a mile long. Perhaps every fifteenth person down the line carried an uplifted torch. As the procession moved slowly toward "the lonesome graveyard" down by the side of the swamp, they sung the well-known hymn of Dr. Issac Watts:
>
> "When I can read my title clear
> To mansions in the skies,
> I bid farewell to every fear
> And wipe my weeping eyes."
>
> Mary's baby was taken to the graveyard by its grandmother, and before the corpse was deposited in the earth, the baby was passed from one person to another across the coffin. The slaves believed that if this was not done it would be impossible to raise the infant. The mother's spirit would come back for her baby and take it to herself.
>
> After this performance the corpse was lowered into the grave and covered, each person throwing a handful of dirt into the grave as a last farewell act of kindness to the dead, and while this was being done the leader announced that other hymn by Dr. Watts:

795 outside the realm of the existing programs, the older tradi-
794 tional methods of helping are reenacted.

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> Gome ta ole timb religion, gome to ole timb religion, gome ta ole timb religion. It be good enoub fer ma mama, it be good enoub fer ma papa, it be good enoub fer me. It be good enoub fer me.

This ole song of religion dedication still has meaning and is still the path taken by younger islanders. But the path these days is not taken without hesitation. Younger islanders spend a great deal of time in discussion of the worths and limitations of the church. The focus of much of this discussion is on the dominance of Elders. The younger islanders feel that the Elders are maintaining the church in the ole manner which excludes their influence. Elders in (791) turn suggest that the practice of religion is a long time faith, that the young ones are recent to their belief and have not paid the religious dues which warrants keeping company (having input into the church) with the ole time practitioners. In spite of the disagreements the young continue to participate in the church.

SEA ISLAND MAGIC MEDICINE:
A CONSEQUENCE OF NECESSITY

758 Sea Islanders have never had ready access to medical
•759 personnel. There are only two doctors on the islands. Both the doctors and a new health clinic system are recent to the

islands. In the absence of medical people, the islanders have historically maintained and relied on home remedies. Because home remedies were the only form of medicine available these practices have continued, particularly among the elder population who have been more deeply rooted in its use.

To the outsider these practices and medical beliefs may seem absurd. The practices however have gained the attention of trained medical persons who are on the island cataloging these remedies.

At the extreme or the most proficient practioners of the home remedy art are called "Hand Workers." Perhaps the most widely known practitioner of this art was the late Dr. Buzzard of Beaufort County, South Carolina. People from all over the nation come to the islands in search of the Hand practitioners. They come for potions, cures, advice and to have old hands renewed.

A Christian people, these practitioners in no way uphold the sterotypical images commonly portrayed in the literature. These practitioners generally attribute their skills as holy gifts which through dedicated practice and study, their art has been refined to meet the needs of their patients.

Mentally these practitioners have stored extensive files of illness-cure remedies. These mental files are

759 usually a work accomplished over a seventy-year span. Discarding dsyfunctional potions and retaining those which work, these practitioners claim their greatest skill is that of memory. An oral people, who rely heavily on the remembered word, practitioners claim that they are simply extraordinarily adept in this process. This ability enables them to recall those remedies which were of proven effectiveness in similar cases.

757 It is difficult to accurately gage how effective this practice has been. Nevertheless one measure comes through examining the health habits of islanders. First the islander would try the family remedy for an illness, if this does not work medical doctors are consulted, if the illness persists then the hands practitioners are sought. The continued existence of these practices on the islands suggests that these latter practices are effective.

759 Hand Practitioners - What They Can Do

Practitioners are regarded as having the ability to perform effectively in the following areas:

1. Heal the physically sick.
2. Bring and change the luck element.
3. Change the habits or doings of wayward people.
4. Unite man and woman in pleasant relationships.
5. Protect the body from harm.

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beliefs of the Southern Negroes as a whole. Indeed, they have actually ceased to take seriously many of the old-time superstitions because of the influence which Penn School has had. Undoubtedly there are still some people who patronize "root doctors" or "cunjuh men," in order to procure charms of various sorts and to get "spells" or "voodoo" put on their enemies. There are also some who actually use the folk remedies for various ills, and there are some who plant crops and kill hogs according to lunar phases. But the general status of the island culture as far as superstition is concerned is not very far below the level of the more backward white groups in this country. A surprisingly large proportion of the Negro folk beliefs found in the South is of European descent, and this holds true for the beliefs of the St. Helena Island Negroes.

Following are some of the traditional folk beliefs which seem to be actually practiced to some extent. Midwives, without the patient's knowledge, sometimes put a hoe or plow point or an ax under the bed to cut the after-pains attending child-birth. It is also thought that if the patient will drink tea made from gizzard which has been dried and powdered, or tea made from the nest of the mud dauber, the after-pains will be reduced. Most families try to pay the midwife promptly for her services, for it is believed that failure to pay may cause her eyes, or even her mind, to be affected. Sometimes a Bible or a broom may be seen lying on the pillow above the head of a sick person. This is supposed to prevent the spirits from taking the person away. Mrs. King, the community nurse, stated that she has occasionally had to combat the use of such remedies as cow excreta and vinegar heated for boils,

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
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among my earliest playmates, and during my whole life his attachment never varied. I shall gratify myself by placing a stone on his grave.[87]

INFANT WELFARE

The children's diseases were sometimes more disastrous than cholera or dysentery, despite the general precautions observed in caring for the plantation children. Planters usually insisted that the young be given special attention, and they also urged mothers to take proper care of themselves during pregnancy. Henry A. Middleton, Jr., would not permit any woman to work on his island lands in midwinter, and he immediately put *enceinte* women on half task until confinement. Every planter who had a hospital for his people insisted that the mothers come there for confinement, for there they could be better cared for and kept more quiet, but the women invariably preferred their own houses where they could gossip with their friends without restraint, and they usually managed, as Couper told Sir Charles Lyell, to be taken by surprise at home. Mothers were allowed a month of rest after confinement, an advantage rarely enjoyed by hard-working English peasants, and were not put at full tasks until the child was eight months old.

Doctors were seldom called at the confinement of a Negro woman,[88] for the woman's mistress herself seldom received such attention. In every group of plantation slaves there were one or more midwives listed on the plantation record as the "granny," or nurse, but known

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] MS in Hawks Letters, Library of Congress. Dr. J. M. Hawks to Esther Hawks, May 17, 1862, from Edisto Island: "In midwifery here, Drs. are not called, several births have occurred since I have been here all attended by the Negro women on the place."

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to the people themselves by the respectful title of Maum. The mistress herself or the overseer's wife was also usually present to assist the midwife at the confinement of a Negro woman. At Christmas the planter rewarded the granny by giving her 75 cents for each delivery during the year. He also might seek to encourage the mother to care for her child properly by giving her, perhaps, as much as a $1 for every living child she had at Christmas. Henry A. Middleton, Jr.'s, practice was to give every woman with an infant one month old $1 and the same amount to every woman with a year-old child. At Christmas in 1859, he rewarded twenty-six mothers with month-old infants, and fourteen mothers with year-old infants.[59]

St. Helena planters allowed new-born infants "two of each garment and six diapers."[60] The garments were flannel dresses, dresses of cotton checks, and jackets of homespun.[61]

As soon as a mother resumed work after confinement, she was often required to take her infant to a nurse or granny, whose task it was to take care of both the "lap babies" and the "knee babies" during working hours. Sometimes the same granny looked after the plantation babies year after year, while on other plantations this task was assigned to a group of women who took turns every month "minding child." Henry A. Middleton, Jr., rewarded the "monthly nurses" on his plantation "75c. for infants that live." As long as a mother suckled her infant, she left her work in the field at stated intervals to do so, or an older child brought the baby to the field to be fed.

[59] Wechaw Plantation Book.
[60] *Port Royal Letters*, p. 44.
[61] Wechaw Plantation Book.